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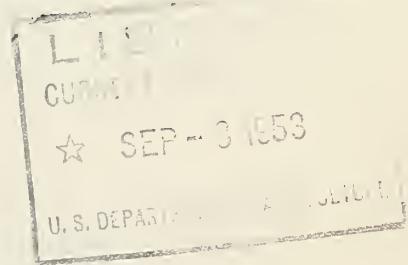
Making Your MEMBERSHIP PUBLICATION Do The Job



FARM CREDIT ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

MISCELLANEOUS REPORT 174

AUGUST 1953



INV. '60

FOREWORD

Most large cooperatives have long recognized the need for a periodic contact with all their members and farm leaders in the area they serve. As a result they have developed effective, high quality membership publications in either newspaper or magazine style. They are usually prepared by trained and experienced information personnel.

However, many smaller cooperatives such as local grain elevators, cooperative creameries, fruit and vegetable cooperatives, cotton gins, production credit associations, and national farm loan associations, also see the need for an inexpensive membership publication or newsletter. Because they do not have trained personnel to put out such a

publication many of them are looking for helpful hints on how to do the job. This publication is designed for these smaller cooperatives whether they now have a membership publication or want to start one. This material was originally prepared several years ago for use of production credit associations by Vernon Vine, then a member of the staff of the Information and Extension Division of the Farm Credit Administration, and now public relations director for a large farm magazine. The material was adapted for the broader use of all types of local farm cooperatives by W. Gifford Hoag and Marie Puhr, Information and Extension Division of the Farm Credit Administration.

Making Your Membership Publication Do The Job

"Howdy folks, here's an important message from your co-op."

That's what your membership publication or newsletter says. It can be an important contact between the association and the member. It is the errand boy who carries timely messages periodically from you folks in the co-op office to each member's home. It is the visitor from your headquarters stopping at a member's farm for a visit about his co-op's business.

Your membership publication, or house organ as it is sometimes called, brings your members short interesting news items that can be made easy lessons on the advantages of cooperatives and how to use them wisely.

Through your membership publication you remind the member of his responsibility as a part owner of his co-op. Your reports on the progress of the association create pride of ownership and develop loyalty. Your membership publication should help sustain member interest so vital to the co-op's con-

tinued success. It helps maintain member support. This means more business from present members and more new members. It helps get across timely and important co-op information. It promotes sound growth.

Cooperatives and other business organizations, time and again have proved the value of a good membership publication. It is well worth the required effort and expense. To do the job, it must be well prepared, but it need not be elaborate. A poorly prepared publication is like a poorly trained employee. The welcome it receives in the member's home depends upon what it has to say and how it says it. It doesn't have to be decked out in finery but it should be neat, easy to look at, and easy to read.

We hope suggestions in this little booklet will help make your present membership publication more effective. If you haven't yet used this time-tested contact, these hints on how to make the job easy and pleasant may help you get started.

PICK A NAME THAT FITS

We all know the husky athletic kid who had to overcome the handicap of the name Percival. If his folks had called him "Jim" his pals wouldn't have nicknamed him "Mugs" in search of something more appropriate. Likewise, "Co-op Chats" fits a co-op house organ better than "The Sagebrush Troubadour." Just plain "Co-op News" or "News and Views" may not have the originality of "Little Journeys Into Co-op Land," but are easier to say and have more reader appeal.

The name of your publication not only should fit its contents, but it also should fit the page. Most membership publications are approximately 8 1/2" x 11" in size. If the name takes up a third or half the page, you have an unbalanced sheet and you have used up too much of your most valuable space. Generally, space for the name and volume number and date need not take over one-fourth the cover page...preferably less.

Some membership publications carry illustrations along with the name or title, which require more space than straight type alone. We refer to such things as The Sign of Dependable Credit, farm buildings, crops, and livestock. In deciding for or against an illustrated title, remember that simplicity is usually most effective. Don't try to be fancy or tricky. If you do, your result may appear amateurish. Be certain that your drawings are well done. You have as good judges of art in rural homes of your members as you do in the city.

Design your title to harmonize with the rest of the page. Various methods of printing are discussed later but remember -- illustrated titles on mimeographed publications too often appear to be overdone. Plain heavy black letters are best whether you are printing from type or mimeographing.

A title can be a problem if you mimeograph your publication unless you have someone skillful with a stylus. Or, you can get over this hurdle by having the

title set up in type and printed separately by a local printer. You can print up the title for several issues at one time at relatively small cost.

WHERE TO GO FOR NEWS

How to fill the sheet with good live news is a puzzle to most co-ops before they get their publication under way. Actually most of the news items and other material will come right to your central and field offices. The quantity will be plentiful. All you have to do is to be on the lookout so you'll recognize it. Your job as editor will be to select and write it.

You will get many news items from employees, directors, and advisory committee members. Frequently other members coming into the office will be the subject of news items or they may mention something that is news. It's up to you and other employees to be alert and make note of these items. Be good reporters. Some folks have a natural nose for news, others have to develop one.

One person should be responsible for

preparing the publication. In a large co-op specialized information or public-relations personnel usually handle membership publications. In some co-ops, the manager or, in a credit co-op, the secretary-treasurer may like to do the job himself. An assistant, a field representative, or a stenographer may be a good editor for a newsletter of a small co-op. Generally women have a knack for recognizing news items when they come along. Thus they make good reporters. In fact each employee should act as a reporter. A little friendly rivalry will help. Have a handy drawer or box for news items and ideas and encourage all employees to make contributions. Don't wait until the publishing date and expect to remember them. If your co-op has field offices be sure to assign someone in each of these offices the responsibility for reporting news from their part of the territory.

WHAT TO

In filling the pages of your house organ, stick to material related to your organization. An article on atomic energy, unless it has some application to cooperatives, is hardly fitting in a co-op publication. Some co-op house organs contain too much economic or other material which is available to members from other sources. Your co-op has a special service to offer. Stick primarily to that.

You will find a lot more good material about your co-op than you have room for. Therefore, go slow in picking up items from other publications. Chances are your member has already seen them and they will be "old stuff" to him. Just remember that your publication is going to visit with the member about your association, so talk to him about such things as:

Annual meetings
Directors' meetings

TELL THEM ?

Advisory committee meetings
News about members
News about association employees
News about your field offices
New policies or procedures
Improvements in service
Work with farm youth and veterans' groups
New personnel and offices
Important farm meetings
News about other co-ops
Progress report on new members, amount of business, farmer ownership, and financial condition
Members' comments concerning service
Suggestions on use of co-ops
Special news such as co-op anniversaries

A few appropriate jokes add informality and human interest, but handle them with extreme care. You are running a co-op service -- not a humor magazine.

Occasionally mention what other local co-ops are doing or the accomplishments of farm organizations. This helps build good will. Their managers may even return the favor by mentioning your association in their publication -- especially if you do them the courtesy of sending them a marked copy.

How To Say It?

The most important or striking item in all your stories should come first. This fixes attention quickly. Then give the facts -- simply, accurately, briefly, and

clearly -- that's what your members will want to read.

Use short words, short sentences, short paragraphs. Avoid using words or phrases not generally used by most farmers. Write the way you would talk to farmers -- don't be formal just because you are writing.

Use lots of names -- names make news. Remember, nothing appeals to members more than to see their own or their neighbors' names in print.

Have something to say, say it, then stop.

CATCH THE EYE -- MAKE THEM WANT TO READ

A membership publication that doesn't have enough "oomph" to catch the readers attention is a waste of time and money. That quality which gives the publication reader appeal is known as good makeup. Good makeup helps hold the reader's attention until he has examined the contents.

Small type for popular reading has long been out of date. Folks, especially farmers, don't like to read fine print. It is tiresome. Wide columns also make reading difficult. Two or three columns are better than one. Even with mimeograph processing on letter-sized page it is better to have two columns than one. There is a tendency for the eye to get lost in a wide column, single spaced.

Avoid long stories. Keep them as short as possible. A long article looks like heavy reading and heavy reading isn't popular. If you can't avoid a long story, break it up with subheadings. They attract attention and catch the eye. Two or three stories on your first page are better than one. You have two or three chances of interesting the

reader instead of one.

Put action in your headings. Keep them short but make them tell what is in the story. "Member Takes Top Prize" is more descriptive than "Prize Winner Announced." Choose a type for headings that is easy to read. If you mimeograph your publication the headings will stand out if you use all caps or underscore them.

Pictures, sketches, and cartoons add interest if they illustrate a point and are well done. Don't use a picture just to make one member happy. The job is to please all your readers, not just one or two. However, most members will be interested in seeing what another farmer is doing especially if it's something out of the ordinary -- unusual action pictures, for instance. Members generally aren't interested in posed pictures of people. Occasional pictures of key employees help to personalize co-op service. However, pictures of personnel should not overbalance or keep out pictures of members. Remember it's a membership publication.

MAKE READING EASY

Most of us are lazy readers. Also, we are accustomed to having our reading prepared in appetizing form. Your publication has a lot of competition for the reader's time. It isn't expected to

be as glamorous as a picture magazine but it must be easy to read if you expect it to be read. Remember that short sentences and simple language are easiest to read.

Letter Press Printing Looks Good

Whatever process of printing you use, make it neat. If it is letter press (regular printing from type) be sure the printer uses clean type. Use simple, good size, readable type. The 10-pt. size with a lead (space) between lines is usually easily read. Stay with one kind of type for the body of your stories and one for the headlines even though you vary the size in your headlines, depending on the importance of the story.

Special articles or paragraphs can be pointed up by setting them in bold face (heavy) type. Boxes (stories or announcements with borders around them) also help to get attention and to break the monotony of the page. Columns should usually not be more than 2 1/4 inches wide. This means 3 columns on 8 1/2 x 11 paper which also gives you more variety in makeup. Use larger type and more space between lines for occasional wider columns.

Mimeographing Economical But Often Unattractive

Because of economy and availability, mimeographing is the process used for some co-op publications. You can do an attractive job with mimeograph although its possibilities are limited. Care in planning and preparing a publication is even more necessary with mimeograph than with other processes.

First, use good stencils and see that the stencils are well cut. If the job is done in your own office the typist may need some practice before she can cut a clear stencil.

One of the biggest improvement in the quality of mimeographing work in the last 10 years has resulted from the use of electric typewriters in cutting stencils. These typewriters produce good clean cut uniform copy. Using new fast drying inks also help to improve the appearance of the finished job.

Reproducing drawings and cartoons with a mimeograph requires some practice with the stylus before results are sat-

isfactory. Reproducing the title will be the most difficult part of the job with mimeograph but you can solve this difficulty, as mentioned previously, by having the title pages printed for several issues at one time by your local printer.

Multilithing Or Offset Has Advantages

Multilithing, or offset printing, (this publication is multilithed) is usually cheaper than regular printing from type and looks considerably better than mimeographing. Where local facilities are available multilith frequently is best suited to a membership publication.

This is a photographic process. The text can be photographed from a proof of regular type set by the printer or photographed from good clear type-written copy. The typist should clean her machine before she starts. Cleaner copy can be produced if the typist has a carbon ribbon on her machine. If typewritten copy is used, headings may be set up by the printer in headline type, or by yourself in "Fototype," a patented name for individual letters that can be pasted down.

Multilith is also superior to mimeographing because photographs can be used. However, photographs usually don't come out quite as well as in regular printing from type. Drawings can be pasted on the sheet with the text and photographed all at once.

Good Paper Essential

Choose good paper for whatever process you use. You will lose a lot of the good effect of all your other careful effort if you resort to poor quality paper. Good weight is as essential as good finish.

Two-color printing, except for the name, isn't feasible on many membership publications. However, you can get the same effect by using colored paper. Be careful in choosing a color. You want good contrast. That is the reason for using black ink on white paper. Therefore, if you use a colored paper, a light tint generally is best. Goldenrod, buff, and light green are good colors, especially the first two. You lose the

contrast of your ink on dark paper, particularly in mimeographing.

You can use a colored ink for the whole job but you are on dangerous ground. Photographs reproduce their best in black ink. If you use a colored ink, be sure it's a dark color and you better stick to pencil, or pen-and-ink drawings in your illustrations.

Size of paper is an important point to consider. Makeup problems increase as the size of the sheet decreases. The

legal size sheet doesn't have good proportions for a pleasing newsletter makeup. Letter size will probably be the most practical whether you use letter press, multilith, or mimeograph.

See Your Printer Or Multilith

If you decide to use printing or multilith processes, talk over the details of choosing type, makeup, paper stock, and other problems with the man who is to do the job.

HOW MANY ISSUES ?

A publication should go out often enough to be a well-known acquaintance. It should be issued frequently so it will be recognized and become established reading in the household. Start with four issues a year, then step it up to every other month if you can. Remember, it will always be a stranger if it comes only once or twice a year.

The job is also easier when it is published at frequent intervals -- it becomes a routine and not a special job. News won't get so stale either.

Who Gets It?

The mailing list will depend on the job you want the publication to do. Of course, it will go to all members. It can help remind desirable former members that you are still in business. Since part of its job is to help extend your co-op service to more people, you will also want to send it to a small list of good prospective members.

You want other agricultural leaders in your territory to know about your service and progress. Therefore, the membership publication should go to county agents, vo-ag teachers, officials of other co-ops, and leaders of farm organizations. Selected dealers in machinery, feed, fertilizer, and livestock should also be well informed on your association service. Send neighboring co-ops a copy. It may give them some ideas for their next issue and you in turn may get some from them.

Method Of Mailing

The least expensive and most convenient method of mailing is to leave a blank space at the bottom of the back page for the required mailing information. The mailing permit number and the return address of your association can be printed on as it goes through the press to print the other copy. This method saves you the cost of an envelope and the labor of stuffing the envelope. You can use it whether you address by hand, with typewriter, or addressograph. The postage is 1 1/2 cents for 1.72 ounces. If you don't already have a mailing permit it can be obtained from the local post office for \$10.

A precancelled government-stamped envelope (2 cents postage for 2 ounces or less) is probably the next cheapest and easiest mailing method. In this case you do not need a mailing permit. Envelopes are ordered from your local post office.

How Much Will It Cost ?

The cost of your membership publication will depend on the way you process it and how often you publish it. Postage will cost you 1 1/2 or 2 cents a copy. Other out-of-pocket costs will probably be less if you mimeograph the job but it won't look as well. The paper, stencils, and processing, will add up probably to about 3 cents a copy. Your over-all cost will run around 5 cents a copy.

Therefore, this periodic visit to the member's household costs very little. How else can you make a friendly contact with so many people and convey important information as frequently and at so little cost?

Don't be discouraged by the complexity of these hints. Most any membership

publication is better than none. These ideas are merely prepared as a guide to those of you who want to do an even more effective job. Remember the most important thing is to get out a publication of some kind and do it often enough so it becomes a well-recognized and welcome little messenger from the member's own cooperative.